

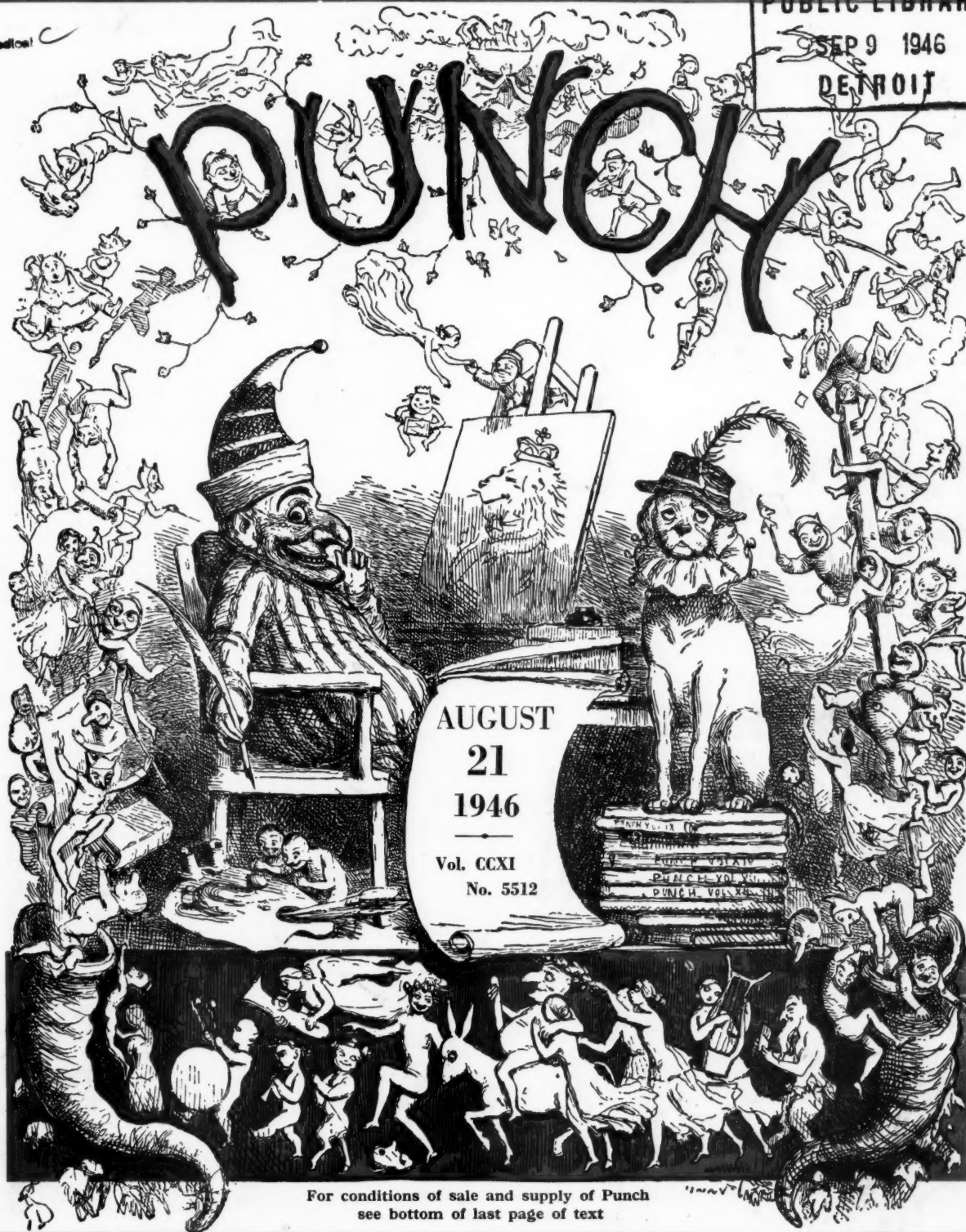
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AUGUST  
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Vol. CCXI  
No. 5512

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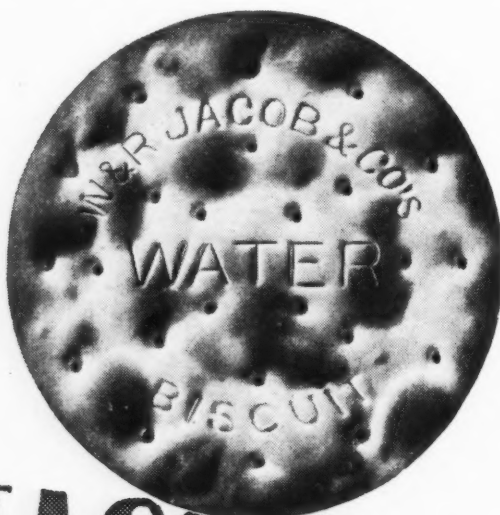
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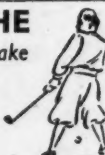
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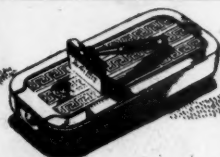
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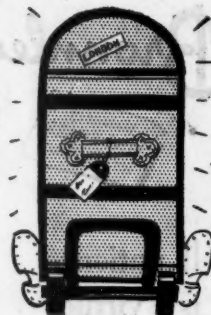
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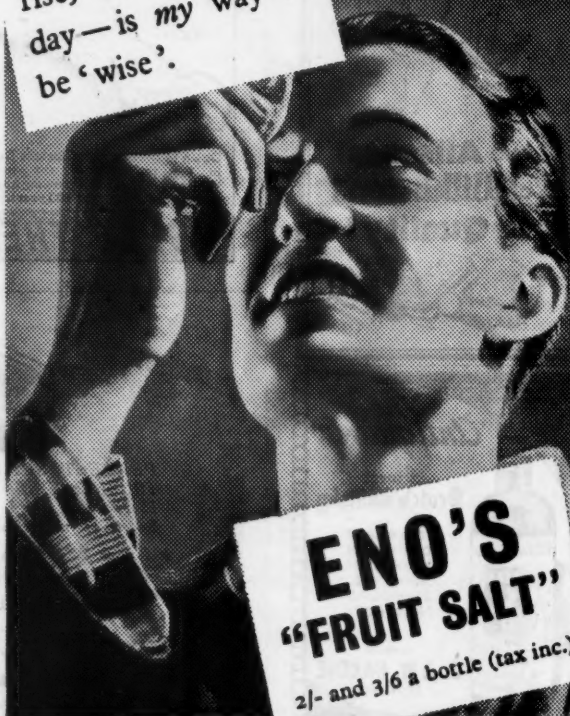
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# PUNCH

OR

The London Charivari



Vol. CCXI No. 5512

August 21 1946

## Charivaria

"FEWER Britons to Run Germany this Winter," says a *Daily Mirror* heading. Any hope of a few fewer to run Britain?

When several housewives arrived at a shop simultaneously an argument ensued as to who should be at the head of the queue. The debate on procedure continues.



A seaside pierrot comedian says he is fed up with the rain this summer. He probably objects to its patter.

A scientist has discovered that herring suffer from nervous diseases. The odd thing is that smoking cures them.

As part of a competition, the inmates of an American prison were invited to submit plans of the ideal home. Nothing was barred.

"The position is that although child under Family Allowances, the 5s. widow's pension, benefit there is no allowance for the first already received in respect of that child will continue."

Got it?

*Evening paper.*

It is suggested that owing to the shortage of supplies in theatre bars a warning bell should sound two minutes before the end of each act.

A lady advertises a butler's dress suit for sale, large size. She has given up trying to obtain a refill.

As we go to press we hear that the Ministry of Agriculture is to appeal for temporary clerks to help save the 1946 harvest.

A Labour M.P. thinks that as far as war taxation is concerned history will never repeat itself. It doesn't have to. We heard it the first time.

### Their Dismal Fête

"On the white elephant stall were Mesdames M—, P—, and T—, while refreshments were in the hands of Mrs. N— and helpers."—*Cheshire paper.*

In America a young man broke off his engagement when he found that the father of his fiancée was a pawnbroker. The general opinion is that once he had popped the question it was too late to question the pop.



### That Labour Government Again

"ENGLAND'S SOCCER XI SURPRISES  
LEFT-WING EXPERIMENT AGAINST SCOTS"

*Headlines in "Daily Herald."*

A new lotion sprayed on the skin will prevent the user from being stung by gnats, midges or mosquitoes. It is said that a little dabbed on the wallet will even keep off confidence tricksters.

A correspondent says he has a lawn which was first laid down about 1740. Genuine antique. Full of worm-holes.

Owing to negotiations between the British Federation of Master Printers and the Printing and Kindred Trades Federation, with regard to hours of work, it has been found necessary to reduce the size of this week's issue, both in editorial and advertising matter.

As soon as these negotiations are settled, increased issues will be published to compensate readers and advertisers for what has been lost this week.

## This England

THE train which is made of tin clanks slowly into the platformless station, the tiny station of Dumbly on the Wold. Out gets the tall frock-coated colonel with the white moustache and the two bulldogs on a leash. He is evidently prepared to hunt the partridge on this July morning or to stalk the elusive stoat. He hands down, from the first-class compartment in which they have travelled, the young lady with whom he has talked so affably. He thinks she is a guest bound for Wuthering Towers, but that is not so. She is the new parlourmaid. The obsequious stationmaster removes his top-hat and bows. The porters lout low. The gig with the tandem receives her and drives her over the cobbled streets between the bow-windowed shop-fronts. 'Tis a typical scene of the nineteen-thirties on a perfect summer day. Children are playing with their tops and hoops, their frilly pantalettes showing beneath their petticoats; or bargaining for alley-taws. A peeler stops the jarvey at the cross-roads to let a herd of shorthorned sheep go by. Away and beyond the village, past the honeysuckled hedges, they speed now to the castellated villa set in elegant shrubberies, the residence of Sir Ffoulkes and his lady spouse.

By mistake the newcomer is shown into the drawing-room, replete with antimacassars and ostrich-eggs, where the noble twain are eating crumpets together—crumpets made of waffles and pasted over with jam. Shyly the girl converses and gulps her tea from the saucer, yet little

do they think she is not a friend of their absent son. It is only when she blurts out that she has come to the Towers to work that politeness is suddenly frozen on their lips. They ring for the butler by pulling a long tasselled cord which breaks and tumbles on their heads. He enters and fixes the young person with a stony stare.

"There is just one thing which I cannot understand," mutters the old baronet to his lady as the girl is led away to the servants' hall. "You said this new parlourmaid comes from Hackney Wick. How is it that she has an American accent which I could hardly cleave with the battle-axe my father used at Fontenoy?"

No. No. He does not say that. I have exaggerated a little. He preserves his English sang-froid. But was it not in a film of *The Talisman* that Queen Berengaria asked a man in chain-mail if she was on the right road for Jerusalem, and the Crusader replied promptly, "Sure, lady," as he raised his vizor, and gave her a courteous leer?

In any case, the audience takes it all quietly, well knowing that America understands modern England, as well as it understands twelfth-century—or, for that matter, twentieth-century—Palestine.

I could go on watching this film about Dumbly on the Wold for ever. The train which is made of tin clanks slowly into the platformless station—but unfortunately we have not the space to run it over twice this week. EVOK.

## Come Out Into the Open, Sir!

*To the Man who arranges about Bicycles, Southern Railway, Waterloo.*

SIR,—I want to start on a quiet note, if I can, and work up. But I am so angry and disgusted about this business that I can hardly keep my hands on the typewriter, and if I start striking out at you right and left before I'm ready for it you've only yourself to thank, as I hope to prove here and now.

Do you know what I have to pay to leave my bicycle for a few hours at one of your stations?

*Eightpence!*

Look! I can travel to Waterloo from this station I'm thinking of, sitting on a comfortable seat (with luck), using up your electricity, and driver's time and wear and tear on rails and all the rest of it, with signalling thrown in, for elevenpence. And I can go there and back for one-and-three. I'm not saying that's cheap, mind, because it isn't; it's a perishing sight too dear. What I am saying is that if you can do all that for me for elevenpence, what on earth do you mean by charging eightpence for what you do with my bicycle?

Let me tell you just what you do do with my bicycle. You lock it up in a little old shed when I arrive in the morning, and you unlock the door and let me have it again when I come back in the afternoon. That is all. I wheel it to the shed and I wheel it away again. It gets no care and maintenance while it stands in the shed. All it does is to occupy a space of perhaps 2" x 60" x 42", or say 5000 cubic inches, during the few hours it remains there.

And your charge for that is *eightpence*.

Let me say here and now that I neither know nor care whether you make any reduction on a weekly, monthly or quarterly basis. It doesn't suit my convenience to use my bicycle on a weekly or any other basis. I use it occasionally, as I have a perfect right to do, to ride to the station, and I rest my case against you simply and solely on the monstrous charge you make when I do so.

Now it might be thought—and I have no doubt you will argue—that it is worth my while to pay a small sum in order to be relieved from all worry about my bicycle while I am hard at work in the City, and that I should be grateful to you for the knowledge that it is safe and sound in your keeping, and that even in the event of some great catastrophe, such as its theft from the shed, or the destruction of the whole station by fire, you would gladly admit responsibility in return for my eightpence and stump up the cost of a new machine. May I then refer you to the Conditions which you have the audacity to print on the ticket issued as a receipt for my bicycle, para. (1) (a):

*The Company shall not be liable for loss, misdelivery or detention of, or damage to—Any articles or property which separately or in the aggregate exceed the value of £5, unless at the time of deposit the true value and nature thereof shall have been declared by the depositor and 1d. per £ sterling of the declared value paid for each day or part of a day in addition to the ordinary cloak-room charges.*

Do you realize what that means? It means that for my outlay of eightpence I get no real sense of security at all. It means that you decline to take proper responsibility



THE ONE-MAN BAND



*"Say what you like about the Minister's housing programme, his tea-roses are a triumph."*

for my bike, the value of which I declare to be not a penny under £7, unless I pay you the fabulous sum of 1s. 3d., or no less than the price of a return ticket to Waterloo.

Is that all? Not by a thundering long chalk it isn't. Read para. (1) (b) (ii.) of your loathsome Conditions:

*The Company shall not in any circumstances be liable for—Any act, neglect or default of their Servants not within the scope of their employment.*

Of course that simply goes and puts an atom bomb right square under my whole position. What is the use of asking me to pay one and threepence to set my mind at ease about my bicycle and then trotting out a condition like that? Suppose some foreman or stationmaster goes and does a long-arm balance on my cross-bar while I'm miles away up in town, thus buckling the frame and blowing the valves out of my tyres. Am I to be told that the man's action was not within the scope of his employment (which I can readily believe) and advised, with contumely, to take the wreckage away within twelve hours on pain of excess charges? Or what?

I shall be glad to have your answer to the above question within three days of the date hereof.

And here's another thing. I collect my bicycle from your shed one evening and ride it home, noticing perhaps a little extra discomfort, but too weary, or too interested maybe in the passing scene, to take much account of it.

Then when I dismount I find the saddle missing. I am annoyed. I feel with justification that there has been carelessness somewhere and I remount the bicycle and sitting easily on the cross-bar (provided always that the stationmaster or foreman has not recently been exceeding the scope of his employment) I return to the station. But when I demand the return of my saddle or its equivalent in hard cash they laugh at me. "Look!" they say. And they point to the place right down at the bottom of the ticket where it says:

*The delivery of the articles or property shall acquit the Company from all further claims in respect thereof.*

"You ought to have asked for your saddle before you took the bicycle out of the shed," they explain.

Well, there's my indictment. I don't suggest that any loss, misdelivery, detention or damage has come, or is likely to come the way of my bicycle while it is in your keeping at my station. The staff there have at all times handled it respectfully and would, I am sure, be ready, if called upon, to lay down their lives in its defence. But I do suggest that if anything *should* happen to it you jolly well ought to pay up and look pleasant instead of wriggling about behind all these ridiculous Conditions. Otherwise what is the eightpence for?

And in any case it ought not to be more than twopence.

H. F. E.

## Song of the Road

### II

#### (From the Highway Code)

21. "It is a courteous and kindly act to help small children, the aged, the infirm and the blind to cross the road safely."

It is an act of grace and kindness

To help the old, lame, blind across the road:

And it surprises me, I must confess,  
That we should have to put it in a Code.

#### GENERAL

22. "Keep well to the left unless you are about to overtake or turn right."

Keep to the left. It is the natives' way;

"Left" is the word, not "centre", sir.  
Good day.

23. "When on a narrow winding road, however familiar to you, go slow. You may come upon danger suddenly."

This narrow, winding road you know, I know:

But none the less go carefully and slow.

Who knows how many prams are round the bend,

What aged crone conversing with a friend,

A bus, a breakdown, or a herd of cows,

Or, possibly, your only child, and spouse?

24. "Be careful when passing standing vehicles and other obstructions; a pedestrian may dodge out from behind them."

If you have read Rule Seventeen  
You know exactly what we mean:  
And I will add but one thing more—  
That prison is a frightful bore.

#### OVERTAKING

28, 29, 30. "Never overtake unless you are sure that you can do so without danger to yourself and others," etc.

The man ahead is not so fast:

You must, you simply must get past.

But overtaking is the test  
Of character: so be your best.

The simplest rule is, Never do it  
Unless you're sure you will not rue it.

No, no, not yet—a van or dray  
Is coming fast the other way:

And though, no doubt, you have a nerve

You must not make him slow or swerve.

No, no, control yourself, my friend:  
Not at a crossing, bridge or bend.

Not at a hump-back—nor a brow.

At last, the road is open. Now!

#### PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS

37. "Look out for pedestrian crossings. Learn and observe the Regulations relating to them. (See page 28.)"

Here are the beacons, here the sacred ground

Where bodies must on no account be found.

Our duties here the Traffic Laws define:  
You should be "stoppable" before the line;

But rare indeed, I much regret to say,  
The motor-drivers who approach that way..

Call us "jay-walkers" if we rove elsewhere:

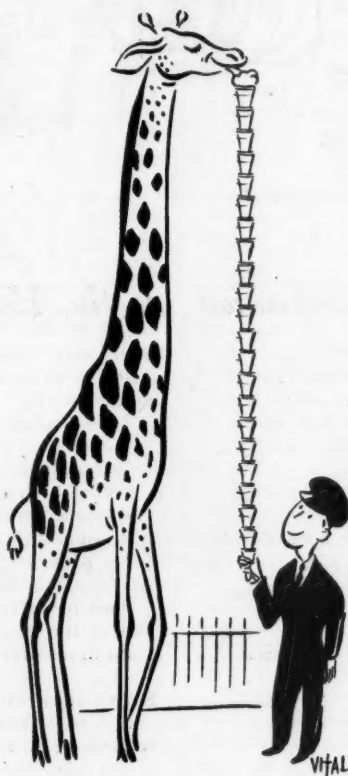
But use us kindly if we walk with care.  
Can you expect a chap to play the game

If he is chased and chivvied just the same?

It's not enough, sir, not to do us harm:  
We have a right to cross without alarm.

So do not whizz an inch behind my back;

For all you know I'll have a heart-attack.



We, for our part, must make our purpose clear,  
Not loiter on the studs, nor stop to jeer.  
If both of us have gumption and goodwill  
The population will be higher still.

#### GENERAL

41. "Give pedestrians and pedal cyclists plenty of room. They are very vulnerable. Be ready for children who may run suddenly on to the road, and for people who may step from a refuge or footpath or from behind a vehicle or other obstruction. Make special allowance for the aged, the infirm, and the blind."

Give bicyclists and walkers a wide berth:

One touch from you and they are off the earth.

Look out for children, doing as they do:  
Look out for men who don't look out for you.

Remember that the old, the lame, the blind

Have not, like you, got engines, and be kind.

46. "Take a pride in your driving. The good driver knows how stopping distances increase with speed and drives accordingly: drives on his engine and not on his brakes; knows the braking and acceleration of which his vehicle is capable in an emergency; and always adjusts his speed to the prevailing road and traffic conditions."

Be proud about your driving. Let them say

"There goes a courtier of the King's Highway.

There goes old Nobby, who makes no mistakes,

Who drives upon his engine, not his brakes;

Who knows exactly what his car will do,  
And at what speed he can keep clear of you."

47. "Do not drive in a spirit of competition with other road-users. If another driver shows lack of care or good manners, do not retaliate."

You're on a road, not in a race:  
Show your politeness, not your pace.  
If other persons play the brute  
Resist the itch to follow suit:  
But let the hog go snorting by,  
And think "How good a boy am I!"

A. P. H.

#### This Week's Metaphor

"There was ample room for elasticity in the plan, but fundamentally its broad backbone was put forward as a serious attempt to solve a serious problem."—Report of a speech in Swansea.



*"You really must learn to eat more slowly, dear."*

### *Accompanied on the Horn*

**I**T is nice to think that at this moment  
there are people singing to themselves in cars.  
Here they come, humming along in the sun;  
there they go, whistling little tunes to the stars.

In Northumberland there is a young man  
driving to Newcastle in an ancient Ford.  
He and a girl in a Dodge at Dorking  
are both singing, in different keys, "The Lost Chord."

An old lady who is never allowed  
to sing at home, as her voice is so tiddley,  
is having a shot at Tosti's "Good-bye"  
as she drives to Bath in her Armstrong Siddeley.

A duke in a Rolls on the Warwick road  
hums in a rich sad way some remembered bar  
from "Butterfly"; and so does the butcher  
racing to Penge in his uncle's nameless car.

A brigadier stuck at the traffic lights  
in Crewe is whistling a hot little rhumba;  
and somewhere between Wells and Devizes,  
Lord Pudsloe is crooning "Trees" to his Humber.

In a hundred cars there are happy men,  
trying to take the low notes as low as Bing,  
and women trying to be Dinah Shores,  
driving with one eye on the glass as they sing.

All over England the cars, like steel birds,  
flash by leaving a trail of notes in the sky.  
Out of the windows, through the sunshine roofs,  
up in a flurry of tinkling sound they fly.

Surely they will be caught into a net,  
and patterned in broad breves over the land,  
so that we live under a symphony,  
and dance the streets to an invisible band. V. G.



### MAKING ALLOWANCES

"Henry, what a marvellous family!"  
"Thirty-five bob a week—less contributions."

## At the Play

### "THE OTHER SIDE" (COMEDY)

I HAVE not read Miss STORM JAMESON'S novel, but Mr. RONALD MILLAR falls far short of convincing me that a French girl of good education and normal outlook, having married a young German officer in her village in '42 (which of course is quite possible) and having gone to live with his family in their castle in the Rhineland, then turns into a loyal German, remaining with his family (who are as horrid to her as they would be) after his death and greeting the French army of occupation not as liberators but as visitors almost from a strange country. Her type of French girl, with 1940 and 1914 and 1870 all throbbing in her blood, is not like that. The first half of the play is taken up by the arrival of the French, led by a fussy little colonel and a major who bears the marks of a session with the Gestapo, by the indignation of the *von Leydes* at being relegated to their stables, and by a rather conventional presentation of the French and German points of view. It is somewhat dull. In the second half the wounded German son-in-law, publicly courteous and anxious for peace, a good character very well played by Mr. VALENTINE DYALL, shows himself as fanatical and unrepentant a German as his revolting little son, and his plot to blow up a trainful of English stirs *Marie*, already in love with the English observing officer, to cross the floor of the castle. The Englishman then being killed, the bitter major improbably takes pity on *Marie* and packs her off back to France.

The German family is faithfully drawn, though it seems a pity Miss LOUISE HAMPTON is not given more rope as the dictatorial grandmother, and Mr. MILLAR skilfully handles the dramatic opportunities towards the end, especially in the scene where Werewolf *Paul* grills his womenfolk in the grand Teutonic manner; but the impression the play leaves is of a competent plot-boiler, nowhere near as original or exciting as Mr. MILLAR'S

*Frieda*. The acting is very fair, the best performances, apart from Mr. DYALL'S, being Miss ELIZABETH SELLARS' *Marie*, Mr. ANTHONY IRELAND'S *Major*, and young Mr. PETER SCOTT'S sickening little Nazi. Since when, by the way, has the Loire run through Normandy? Or was I dreaming?

### "FEAR NO MORE" (LYRIC, HAMMERSMITH)

Neither the Society of Authors nor the League of Literary Somnambulists has ever drawn up a set of rules for the

out on the heart of a *Mr. Arcularis*. It is touch and go, but the anaesthetist's gauges show the patient still retaining a good head of steam, when the action switches to his private ward, where, tottery but much congratulated, he is going away. Next we see him boarding a ship, and it is not until we realize we have already met his cruise-companions round the operating-table that we know something odd is afoot. Nobody quite recognizes anybody else, but people have a feeling they have seen people before; and *Mr. Arcularis* grows strangely shivery and

suffers frightful nightmares which take him on private rocket-rides through the stratosphere and make him talk rather heavy stuff on his return about the behaviour of the soul. His nurse, now just a nice girl on holiday, is kind to him, but even she is startled, as he is too, when the *Captain* accuses him of being the sleep-walker who is stealing chisels and creeping down at night to work on the lid of a coffin in the hold. What is it all about? Are we outward bound, are these solid creatures spooks, why does the jolly *Captain* use phrases like "cosmic chemistry," and by what means does *Mr. Arcularis*' dead wife appear to tell he is haunted by unhappiness not because she threw herself from a balcony but on account of the opportunities he has missed to do her in himself? The answer, given in a brief flashback to the operation, is that he has died and all that has happened is his last crazy dream, inspired by ether and remorse.

Clearly there are the ingredients of drama here, but neither the mystery nor the philosophy is good enough, and though some of the scenes are gripping, notably the *Captain's* inquiry, there is too much high-flown talk of an unproductive kind. Of *Mr. Arcularis*, thus suspended so dubiously between the dimensions, Mr. RAYMOND HUNTLEY succeeds in making a personality, and that in the circumstances is praise. There is a fine performance, indeed a beautifully sensitive piece of acting, by Miss WENDA ROGERSON as the *Nurse*, and Miss JOAN HAYTHORNE and Mr. BILL SHINE double other parts effectively.

ERIC



GESTAPO HOME-WORK

|                                  |                        |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| <i>Paul von Galen</i> . . . . .  | MR. VALENTINE DYALL    |
| <i>Marie von Leyde</i> . . . . . | MISS ELIZABETH SELLARS |
| <i>Lotte von Leyde</i> . . . . . | MISS PAMELA BLAKE      |

concoction of the dream-play, but surely a sound convention to start from is that unless the whole object is mystery then the medium should be made clear by the end of the first act. Beyond that it is uncomfortable and in the highest degree irritating not to know whether one is engaged in a long-term astral picnic or merely in a conducted tour of the subconscious. In this I think Miss DIANA HAMILTON and Mr. CONRAD AIKEN are at fault in their dramatization of a short story by the latter.

The play opens with a realistic scene in an operating-theatre, where some formidable modification is being carried

## At the Opera

## "DON PASQUALE" (CAMBRIDGE)

THE New London Opera Company have shown great courage in deciding to add *Don Pasquale* to their fledgling repertoire. It is nice to be able to congratulate them on the success which crowned their efforts last week, with a special word of commendation for DINO BORGIOI, the vocal director, ALBERTO EREDE, the musical director and conductor, and MICHAEL BENTHALL, the producer.

DONIZETTI's little masterpiece, frothing with gaiety and light as air, is of all Italian comic operas perhaps the most difficult to perform, and should the interpretation flag or falter for an instant it collapses like a pricked balloon. The present production owes much of its success to the vivacious acting of ALDA NONI, a delightful Italian coloratura soprano, and to the superb artistry of MARIANO STABILE, an old friend whom we are glad to welcome back to London. The honours are, however, shared by the young English bass, MARTIN LAWRENCE, who even in this distinguished company proves himself more than able to hold his own. Mr. LAWRENCE is an artist of whom great things may be expected in the future. The two other chief members of the cast are ANDREW MACPHERSON, who has a charming light tenor voice but not much idea as yet of acting, and TONY SYMPSON, who is very amusing as the sham notary.

*Don Pasquale* is compounded of the familiar opera bouffe ingredients—the fat, elderly and wealthy bachelor, the youthful and penniless lover, full of romantic despair, whose troubles are of course all ended in the last scene; the lady of his dreams, from whom the elderly would-be lady-killer tries to part him; and the jolly, match-making busybody whose job it is to keep the pot boiling. The contents of this particular pot are so well mixed and stirred with such style by Signor STABILE that it never ceases bubbling merrily from the time the curtain first discloses *Don Pasquale* in a gorgeous dressing-gown pacing up and down in a fever of impatience at the non-arrival of Dr. Malatesta with news of his bride-to-be, until Norina, at last united with Ernesto, points the moral of the story in the closing scene. One of the most delightful moments is the duet in which Malatesta tells Norina how to ensnare *Don Pasquale* and so torment him that he will be thankful to be rid of her and make Ernesto a handsome

allowance to take her off his hands. Another is that between *Don Pasquale* and Malatesta—*Pasquale* describing with glee how he is about to wreak vengeance on the lovers, and Malatesta describing still more gleefully how in fact the lovers are about to turn the tables on *Don Pasquale*. This is brilliantly performed, and brings so much applause that it has to be repeated. Then of course there is the famous quartet in the mock marriage scene, which is such a tangled pattern of cross-purposes that it might be a parody of the discussions of the Big Four at the Peace Conference.

The settings by JOSEPH CARL are in baroque style, and the costumes mid-eighteenth-century. The first scene depicting *Don Pasquale's* bedroom, conveys discreetly but successfully that its owner is wealthy, slightly vulgar and, though long a bachelor, by no means insensible to the charms of the fair sex. The second, Norina's bedroom, is a froth of girlish pink nonsense, while the romantic garden-scene is a cool and effective contrast to *Don Pasquale's* slightly overpowering salon.

D. C. B.

## Impending Apology

"This is indicated by the fact that Arab states are sending statesmen to Alexandria as well as foreign Ministers."

Egyptian paper.

## Floral Tribute

(Stimulated by listening to a Laverock or Lark, while fishing for a Chavender or Chub.)

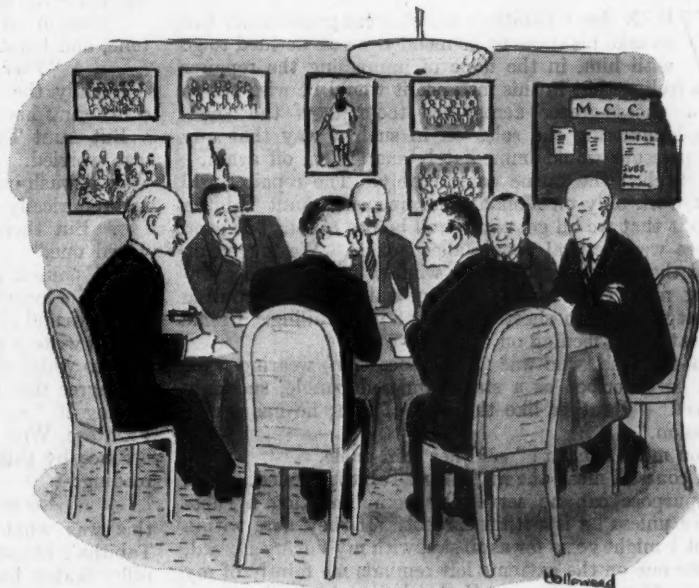
THE monkey-flower, or mimulus,  
The mimulus, or musk,  
That grows beside the Imulus,  
The Imulus, or Usk,  
Is humble and subfimus,  
Is modestly subfusc.  
Yet, when at evening dimulus,  
When at the falling dusk  
I chew the bitter himulus  
Of life, the bitter husk—  
Harder than any rimulus  
(A rimulus, or rusk),  
Such as might crack a timulus,  
An elephantine tusk—  
Then to the stream I bimulus,  
All eagerly I busk,  
To gaze on thee, O mimulus,  
And from thee draw a stimulus,  
A stimulus, or stusk.

o o

"Stated to have been making a nuisance of himself, — was told by the chairman that his conduct would get him nowhere. If he interfered in any way whatever he would be there again."

"Nottingham Evening Post."

Would he recognize it the second time?



"I don't think we ought to have been influenced either way by the fact that he's already got a passport."



"They serve quite a fair lunch here, but one has to be in good time."

## Aunt Tabitha on the Mend; or, Goody No-Shoes

**W**HEN Aunt Tabitha's eldest great-grandfather had to take his shoes to be mended we all decided to go with him, in the hope of impressing the repairer with a feeling that in this instance it would be wise not to drag a cheese-grater across the toe-caps of the shoes before hammering the soles on in such a way that any slight pressure would immediately snap them off again.

We swelled the queue considerably. The repairer will accept work only on Monday morning, and Aunt Tabitha saw to it that we all got there well before 8 A.M.; but even so there were several people ahead of us. We tagged on behind them, staring in at the window where three grim-looking men, their mouths full of nails, sat belabouring decrepit shoes with short lengths of park railing. Beside them sat a rat, feeding on cobblers' wax.

Aunt Tabitha, who was (for the occasion) wearing what might be described as a star-spannered bangle, suddenly observed: "I rather like the look of him; he has a nice expression."

"You mean the rat?" said her thin uncle.

"Of course I mean the rat," Aunt Tabitha replied. "No good purpose can be served by complimenting a shoe-repairer unless he is within earshot. If they were within earshot I might go so far as to say, with my fingers crossed, that the one on the extreme left reminds me faintly of my favourite film star, Gregory Peck (cha-la, cha-la)."

The one on the extreme left looked up, glowered at her, and looked down again, releasing a shower of nails.

"I knew a shoe-repairer once," said Aunt Tabitha's fat uncle in a chatty tone, "who made a very good thing of

the job. My stars! His earnings were astronomical. He had a planetarium cigarette-case."

"Well, for my part," said Aunt Tabitha's great-great-Aunt Maud, "I think they're a lot of sourpusses. And you can't get a silk purse out of a sourpuss."

"Who wants a silk purse?" said Aunt Tabitha sharply. "We are here on business connected with grand-parental footwear."

It was at this point that we noticed that her eldest great-grandfather, the man who wanted his shoes mended, had only just arrived. The queue was now overflowing into the road, and as he joined it he narrowly escaped being run over by a Board of Trade official who drove by without sounding his horn of plenty.

"Hoy!" called Aunt Tabitha, making room for him next to the window. He bustled up, unwrapping his parcel. It then became evident that to the bottom of each shoe was affixed some mechanical contrivance.

"You ought to know better," Aunt Tabitha's thin uncle said sourly to the old gentleman. "Besides, you ought to have given your binoculars to the Government in 1940."

"They aren't binoculars," he replied indignantly. "They're roller-skates." But he began to try to take them off with a screwdriver kindly lent by another member of the queue.

The shoe-repairer on the extreme left, after watching through the window for some moments with an expression of horror, left his seat and came out of the door, accompanied by the rat. He bent to scrutinize the shoes in the hands of Aunt Tabitha's eldest great-grandfather, straightened up, bent down again and said in a sepulchral tone (to the rat): "This will have repercussions."

"Will they have snow on their boots?" Aunt Tabitha inquired vivaciously.

But the shoe-repairer had already withdrawn, closely followed by the rat. Aunt Tabitha was offended.

"It comes to something," she said discontentedly, "when a shoe-repairer won't even answer a civil question. Ah, well—the atomic age... Everything is breaking up..."

"'Fission' is the word," said her fat uncle in a brisk tone, and burst into song:

*"Ther fission-men orv Eng-glernd—"*

Luckily the queue moved along slightly at this point, distracting his attention before he got to the second line.

But Aunt Tabitha, peering ahead towards the counter, was worried. "I see a cloud on the horizon, no bigger than a wash-hand stand," she began—"I speak of course metaphorically—which can only be described as ominous... But then the whole question of shoe-repairing is a vexed one."

She paused and looked round; seeing only our eager faces, she looked away again.

"Boys and girls," she went on. "I will make a suggestion. Let us write a group letter to *The Times* about the pretty pass to which shoe-repairing has come, signing it—for you will agree that our own names are too lacking in colour—signing it 'A. Primrose Byer, Rivers Brimm, A. L. O. Primrose, Woz Tooim, and Itwz Nuffin Moore.'"

Since by this time a card had gone up on the counter reading:

NO MORE WORK ACCEPTED TILL EASTER

this was what we went away and did. As for Aunt Tabitha's eldest great-grandfather, he just had to put the roller-skates back.

R. M.

"A motorist, a cyclist and a walker describe how they spent a day in Worcestershire, followed by an Interlude."—*Radio Times*. It must have had quite a job to keep up.

## Our Booking Office

(By Mr. Punch's Staff of Learned Clerks)

### Magic Shadow-Show

CHILDREN are like sweet-peas—or if you like to put it more vulgarly—scarlet runners. You cannot arrange their tendrils round any support. They do it themselves if the supports are congenial. And if you unwind them too often, the plant flags. This was what happened to *Piccola* (GOLLANCZ, 7/6), whose childish story, from five to twelve, is recounted by Miss HELEN LA PENTA who is only twenty herself. *Piccola* first emerges in an Italian convent where she enjoys all the fun of the fair except the education, sacred and profane, that convents normally bestow. However, as young ladies *never* did what they wanted in this particular convent, *Piccola* is lucky to be left at a loose end with the gardener, the gardener's boy, the lay-sisters and the convent dog. A holiday spent with her delightful Italian grand-parents tightens another tendril; but that too is wrenched away by a somewhat cavalier artist father, arrived to take his orphan daughter to America. The trouble with this graceful magic-lantern show is a sense of confusion between the showman and the slides. Sometimes the child is the commentator; but the entertaining chapter where she makes a tour of the New England churches and winds up in Black Cookie's meeting-house is youth's post-mortem on childhood.

H. P. E.

### The Stage Through the War

This war galvanized the theatre in a way the last one failed to do. The ancient formula of girls and giggles was still provided freely for the tired warrior, but even he formed an important part of the great new audience which sprang up in London and all over the provinces, demanding—and getting in unheard-of profusion—the best of the classics and the moderns, many of which had lain beyond the reach of the average man because they had been thought by the average management to be the shortest cut from Shaftesbury Avenue to Carey Street. C.E.M.A., now the Arts Council (under whose umbrella the admirable Old Vic companies blossomed), E.N.S.A., the British Drama League and other bodies all did herculean work; and a good account of it, besides a detailed record of major London productions from 1939–46 and a Who's Who of the contemporary stage, is included in *British Theatre* (BRITISH YEARBOOKS, 21/-), by Mr. PETER NOBLE. It will be found especially useful by those whose war service kept them out of touch. His chapters are inclined to overlap, and some of his criticisms are too tinctured by politics—why, for instance, should he condemn as cynical the substitution (out of necessary courtesy to a new ally) of Germany and the Greeks for Russia and the Finns in *There Shall Be No Night*, when the play is about a small country done down by a big one?—but no one will deny his real zest for the theatre, nor will many disagree with his view that there is more hope for it now, if we seize our new opportunities, than there has been for a long time. The book includes a large number of excellent photographs of war-time productions.

E. O. D. K.

### Kohler of the K.W.V.

In an introductory letter to *The Memoirs of Kohler of the K.W.V.* (HURST AND BLACKETT, 12/6), Field-Marshal SMUTS calls the K.W.V. (the Co-operative Wine-Farmer's Association of South Africa) "the greatest and most successful feat in agricultural co-operation which South Africa has as yet performed." Mr. KOHLER was born in

South Africa, in 1862, a year which marked the beginning of a disastrous slump in the wine industry of the country. Fifty-four years later he inaugurated the K.W.V., which had to struggle, Field-Marshal SMUTS writes, for a full generation against infinite discouragements and difficulties before it achieved its present place in the life and economic structure of South Africa. Mr. KOHLER's memories go back to his paternal grandmother, who remembered Napoleon with "intense and frightening aversion," and inspired Thomas Moore to write "The Last Rose of Summer." Her son, Mr. KOHLER's father, emigrated to South Africa, where he was brilliantly successful both as an architect and an engineer. But he lacked staying-power, and during an economic depression at the Cape departed for the States, leaving his wife to support herself and, in time, a second husband, who was also lacking in stamina. Meanwhile her son, who combined his mother's courage and his father's brilliance, had started life as a peripatetic dentist. Leaving dentistry for the Rand, he became a director of several gold-mining companies, had a taste of politics in the days of Cecil Rhodes, and finally settled down to his life's work as a wine-farmer.

H. K.

### Wisden

*Wisden Cricketers' Almanack 1946* (SPORTING HAND-BOOKS, LTD.) is out and about. Not yet so portly as in unrationed days (the Editor, Mr. HUBERT PRESTON, expresses the hope that this will be the last curtailed issue), the present Almanack has yet plenty to offer for the 8/6 (cloth boards) or 6/6 (limp linen) at which it is priced. Special articles include an account of "A Hundred Years of Surrey Cricket," by Mr. H. D. G. Leveson Gower, and a note on Edward Paynter, now lost because of advancing years to county and England cricket, by Mr. Robertson Glasgow. Next year there will be the same sad office to perform for another great cricketer from the north, Maurice Leyland.



H. G. WELLS

An impression by L. G. Illingworth

## Letter from Africa

MOSOKO, KUGOMBALAND

July 10th, 1946

**D**EAR CAPTAIN SYMPSON,—  
Or should I perhaps humbly indite Esquire Sympson since you will by this date have thrown off your military disguise or cloak and be civilized again? It is many moons since I had the gratification of wishing you a sad farewell and the small officer with the sandblown moustache to whom you were so much stuck.

How did you find your cows on returning from the fray? As for mine that is a long story to which I will not botherate you unduly, but of sixteen there were but nine and an extreme thinishness pervaded them. My honoured Chief Matungo wept greatly and said disease had smitten them, but perhaps it was what the English say so truly rather much my eye, since the number of Matungo's cattle has increased as the sands of the sea for number.

Also how are your wives? Not I hope as the saying is while the cat is away the mice will play. I am as you know still in the singular state.

Our friend Yowana Kiwanuka had the deeply-sought honour of representing Kugombaland in the great Victorious Parade in London last month, and is now returned full of pride and astonishment. He speaks much and at great length and tallness of a certain railway-train that travelled under the earth on which if he does not lie he enjoyed many happy hours going round and round for the extremely low price of twopence or twenty cents. He says the seatings were good but the hangings better and more frequent and that when a village was reached and the travellers desired to emerge themselves the doors opened magically much to his astonishment. I would be glad to have your denial of these things as Yowana is much puffed up and is approaching on the strength of his safari a certain feminine woman with whom I had hoped shortly to leave the singular condition.

All these wonders and others I would like well to see and much of the purpose of this letter is in this fact. How I look at it is this if you will excuse me. In Middle East I was your batman-driver and you will remember clearly

that I drove straight and hit nothing except once the rear-side of a camel which animals not being frequent according to Yowana in London will not repeat itself. As to the batman job, whose trousers were ironed more level?

So it seems to me that it would be a good movement if I was to fly to England and stay with you a year or longer or shorter according to the falling-out, driving you hither and thither to Westminster Abbey and the Houses of Parliament as in goneby days I drove you in Damascus and Cairo and many strange places.

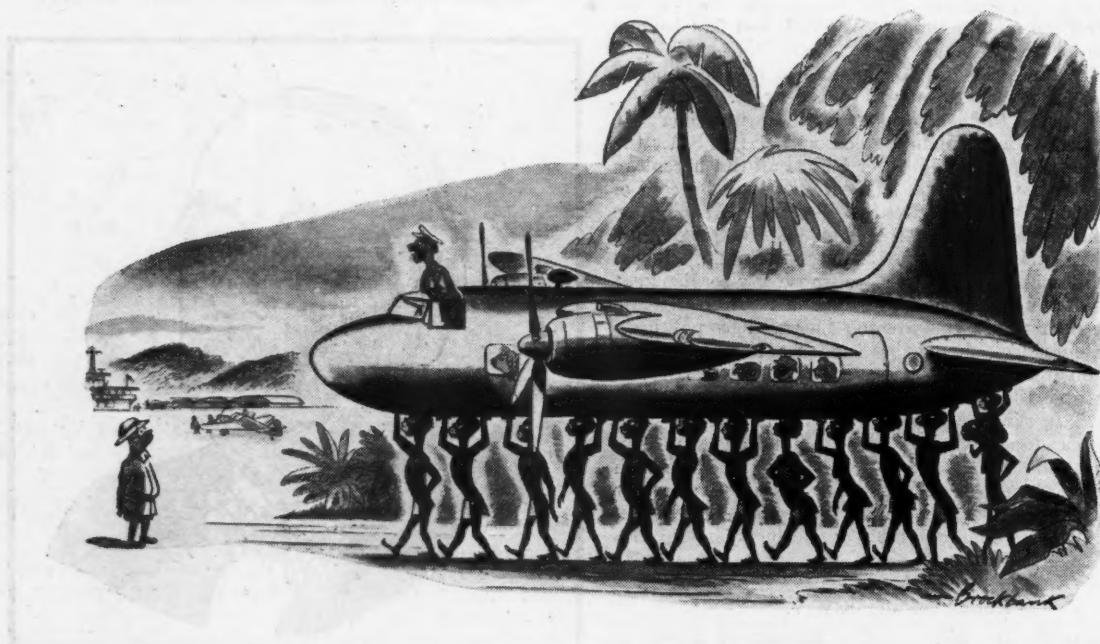
The money for my tripping should be sent by care to the District Commissioner here and not by any accounts to Chief Matungo for reasons which we will not put in pursuit of this letter.

Meanwhile I should be happy to know that Yowana lies heavily about the doors that open without hands so that I can unpuff him.

May my blessings also rest upon the small sandblown officer if you are still within a stones-throwing of his hut.

Your ever friend and child,

OBONGO, son of DONGO.



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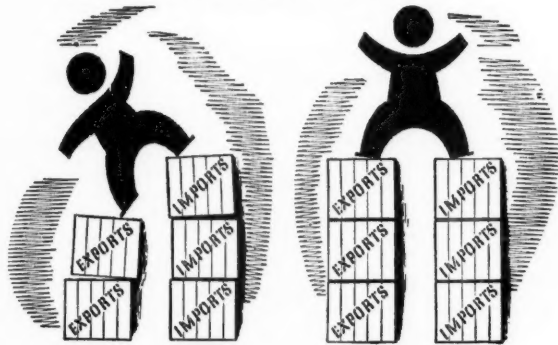
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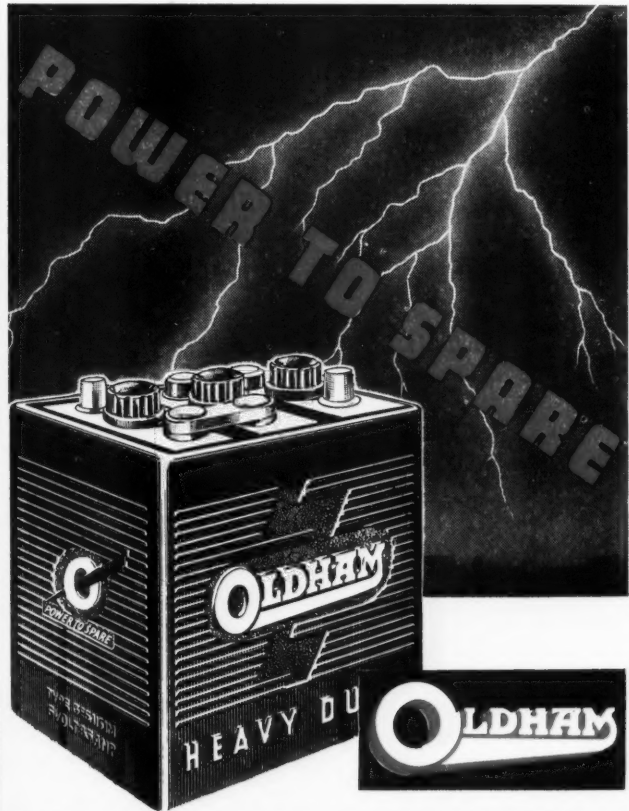
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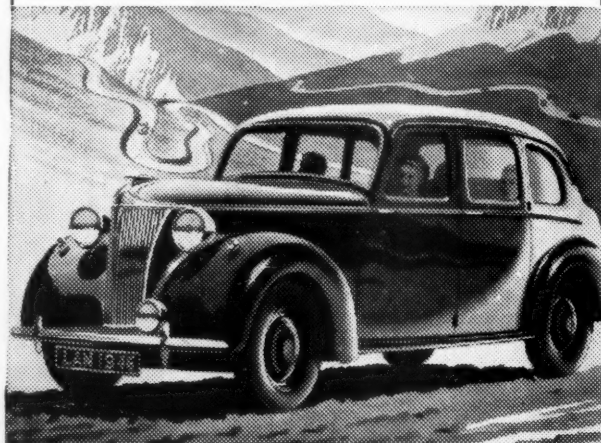
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